

OBITUARY OF THE LATE REV. JOSEPH ADDISON,  
OF RODWELL, NEAR WEYMOUTH.

It pleases Almighty God in the dispensations of his providence often to spare for a considerable time the infirm, the feeble, and those whose dissolution seems nigh at hand; and to remove almost instantaneously those whose years, health, and apparent usefulness would suggest the hope of years to come. This observation has been recently exemplified in the case of the late Rev. Joseph Addison, of Rodwell, near Weymouth, who died on the 3rd of December, 1832, in the 46th year of his age, after one week's illness. Until the commencement of the fatal attack, Mr. A. was engaged with unremitting diligence and activity, in the superintendence of a school for young gentlemen, which he conducted with singular ability and success, and obtained in a high degree the affections of the pupils, and the confidence and esteem of their parents.

While the health, the comfort, and the advancement of those intrusted to his charge in valuable human knowledge, were the objects of his diligent attention, it was to the training them up as "members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," that his most earnest endeavours were directed. 'I will endeavour,' said he to a parent committing his son to his care, 'to do my duty to *you* by your child, and I will endeavour to do it to *God* also.'

One of the most striking peculiarities of his character as an instructor of youth, was the extraordinary degree in which he was enabled to maintain a religious and moral influence over the minds of his pupils; and to impart to them as it were, a portion of that holy atmosphere in which he himself lived and breathed. This, under the Divine blessing, was effected,

not so much by formal addresses, as by the silent, but powerful influence of his own example, accompanied by a word in season of reprehension, advice, or exhortation. The behaviour of his young flock during divine service, was not only decent and decorous, but so truly devotional and intelligent, as to attract the surprise and admiration of the numerous strangers who often frequent Wyke church. This church, being at some distance from Rodwell, when the weather was unfavourable, Mr. A. was in the habit of performing divine service at home; on these occasions, he endeavoured by familiar, pointed, and lively addresses, suited to their age and capacity, to impress powerfully their hearts, and he had not unfrequently the satisfaction of seeing the tear of contrition, or of devotional feeling, steal down the cheeks of his young auditors. Though a sincere and zealous churchman, yet he gladly availed himself of Dr. Watts's catechisms, as the ground work of his catechetical instructions to his pupils, on Sunday evenings; and he often expressed himself as being deeply indebted to the aid of these little manuals of sound, catholic, and spiritual piety. One of the rules from which he never departed was, that no boy should be permitted to dine out on Sundays: the Sunday, he often observed, instead of being at Rodwell School a day of idleness, was one of their most busily occupied, as well as most interesting days. Austerity, however, (justly so called) constituted no part of his religious character; he was possessed of peculiar hilarity and gaiety of spirit; and with him religion was the never-failing fountain of his joy, for (to quote an expression from one of his own sermons,) '*Who may be cheerful,*



if the Christian is to be *gloomy*?' 'In life, *God* is my only solace and my succour, and in death he shall be my eternal portion.' Yet, was he aware that it is no light matter to become a Christian; and in conversation on one occasion, a friend having asserted the necessity of *seriousness* in religion, he replied, 'Yes, I agree with you there; I am naturally of a lively and buoyant disposition, but *touch me on religion, and I am serious instantly.*'

Another peculiar feature in the character of the late Mr. Addison, as a master, was the extraordinary degree in which he succeeded in gaining the affections of his pupils; and at the same time, the prompt and implicit obedience which they paid to his commands. A singular and happy union of sound judgment, firmness, and kindness in his conduct towards them, enabled him to attain this desirable result. He used to say, that he had three rules, from which he never departed in his conduct towards the youths who were under his care.

First, never to make a *promise* which he did not *fulfil*.

Secondly, never to *threaten* a *punishment* which he did not *inflict*.

Thirdly, to treat them with confidence, and make friends of them as early as possible.

Thus, the great point of obedience once gained with the pupils, he was at liberty to let all the warmth and kindliness of his affections expand towards them; and the lively and grateful attachment of all those young gentlemen who have been under his care, and their unfeigned sorrow for his loss, afford the strongest testimony to the kindness of his behaviour towards them, of which, it is not too much to say, that it was *parental*. As the master and pupils used to take their morning walk by the sea-beat shore, the little members of the flock were often observed to run up to him, to take his hand, and kiss it with playful affection, then

run off to their sports again. One little boy having been ill at Rodwell School, his father said to him, 'Well, William, your *master* is kinder to you than your *papa*, is he not?' 'No, *papa*, but he is *as kind*,' was the prompt reply. With affecting conscientiousness of spirit, he clung to the duties of his stewardship to the last, and during the week of his lamented illness, as long as memory maintained her seat in his mind, his inquiries for the welfare of the boys were frequent and earnest; and when assured that they were all well, and diligently attending to their studies, 'then,' said he, 'I am happy.' So deeply were the feelings of these young gentlemen interested for their beloved instructor, that it is said by some of the elder among them, that during the time of his illness, a pin might usually have been heard drop in the apartment where they were all assembled—so careful were they not to disturb him by the least noise. And when at length the melancholy tidings were made known to them, that their revered Preceptor was no longer an inhabitant of this world, deep and poignant was their sorrow for his loss, and some of them said they 'had lost in him a second father!' Alas! it has pleased God to smite the shepherd, and the sheep of his little flock are scattered.

But it was not *only* as an instructor of youth that our departed friend was useful and valuable to the public. As a minister of Christ, he was far from being an idle labourer in the vineyard of his Lord. He had indeed of late years no stated duty, (except occasionally, and for a limited time supplying a vacant curacy) his laborious duties in the school would not have allowed time for the due performance of those connected with a regular cure of souls. But it was his delight to avail himself of every opportunity (and there



were many afforded him) of preaching the great truths of salvation, both at Wyke and Melcombe Regis, and in other churches in that neighbourhood. And this he did, not for 'filthy lucre's' sake, but gratuitously and freely, and of 'a willing mind.' Whenever any brother in the ministry needed his assistance, it was always readily granted; and the mercenary, or the slothful pastor, would have been at a loss to discover the motive of his joy on these occasions, for he was as happy in improving such opportunities of usefulness, as 'they who find great spoil.' Nor did he seek as the recompence for such exertions, the meed of earthly praise, or honour, for it was to the poor more especially that he delighted to preach the glad tidings of salvation; but he knew that "he who winneth souls is wise," and that "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars of the firmament, for ever and ever." His preaching was VERY POPULAR; and the intimation that there would be an opportunity of hearing him, was received with general satisfaction, and a full congregation always assembled, among which there were usually included not a few Dissenters. The matter of his discourses was scriptural, solid, and containing a happy union of doctrinal and practical instruction. If he had *favourite topics*, on which he more frequently dwelt than on others, they were Justification by faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ, and the practical holiness of the believer, as the inseparable concomitant of his acceptance with God, through the merciful influences of the Holy Spirit. His voice was strong and clear, and its modulations pleasing; his manner was simple, earnest, feeling, and impressive. It was once said of his *reading* of Scripture, by a poor but intelligent auditor, that 'it was as good as a commentary.'

When the pressure of other indispensable duties permitted, he delighted to dedicate his leisure to theological study and composition; and it was his habit continually to compose sermons at every interval of time which he was enabled to seize for this favourite occupation, although frequently without any immediate occasion for their use: thus, he was always prepared with a sermon at the shortest notice. Such an employment was to him the most delightful exercise of his faculties; and as he mentioned to some of his friends, his rides, and his walks, were usually the seasons when he planned and prepared his pulpit ministrations. He once familiarly said, 'If my horse possessed reason and memory, he would know a great many sermons.' Thus did he "walk with God," and "delight himself in his statutes," and redeem time for the most valuable purposes; and could inanimate nature speak, it would attest the sincerity and fervour of his devotional feelings.

His value as a parent can only be adequately estimated by his five young sons, who have now to mourn the severe and irreparable bereavement of all those privileges which they once enjoyed in the possession of *such* a father, who had also, from their early childhood, supplied to them their mother's loss; and combined in his care of them, maternal tenderness, with paternal judgment and firmness.

It may now be neither uninteresting, nor unprofitable, to advert to some circumstances connected with the last illness and death of this faithful servant of Christ. Some weeks previous to this lamented event, in a conversation with one of his near relatives, who was very ill, and who had been speaking on the subject of death, he said, *I have such faith in my Saviour, that if he were to summon me at this moment, I should nei-*



ther be afraid, nor unwilling to go to him.' This relation said, 'Could you then give up all your children?' 'Yes,' he replied firmly, 'I could give them all up.' The Sunday preceding the Monday on which his last illness commenced, he read prayers twice at Wyke church, and it was observed by some of the congregation, that his countenance was marked by a more than ordinary expression of heavenly serenity. The discourse preached in the morning was from Psalm xc. 1, 2. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." From this beautiful passage of Holy writ, the preacher was led to enlarge on the believer's safety and happiness, in having found a *home*, and a *dwelling-place*, in the *bosom of his God*; and *that a home*, and a *dwelling-place*, from which neither the storms of life, nor the tempest of death, shall ever be able to dislodge him. It was observed that our departed friend looked, as if he deeply enjoyed, and realized these blessed truths; but it is affecting to survivors to consider, how little he could at that moment foresee for how short a future period *he* was to find a *home on earth*; and how rapidly approaching was his hour of trial, when his "heart and his flesh would fail," and he would need to be "received into everlasting habitations." This season was with him, the calm before the storm; but the storm is over, and its wild waves have wafted his favoured bark into the haven of eternal rest! After divine service, when our late friend went into the vestry, the Rector, (who was also his near relative) thanked him for his assistance in reading the prayers, and observed that he had never heard them so well read by him,

as on that occasion;—to which our departed friend replied, 'When devotion comes from the heart, one can't help reading well.'

The following morning that attack of illness commenced, which proved "a sickness unto death." On the Thursday following, his usual medical attendant hinted to him, that as there might be some degree of danger in his case, it would be desirable to call in the aid of a physician. To this communication, (although even then quite unexpected by him) our departed friend replied with the utmost calmness,—'Oh! if you think it will *alarm*, or *distress* me to hear that I am in danger, you *do not know me*; a Christian, who is at peace with his God, through the atonement of his Saviour, has no cause to fear death.' He then went on to recite many passages of Scripture, expressing his full assurance of salvation, through the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God, who was slain to take away the sins of the world." To a faithful servant, who sat up with him a few nights before his death, he said, 'Do you think that I should be afraid to die? Oh no, for I *know* that my redeemer liveth; MY redeemer,' he repeated, 'mark that.' To one of his sons, who, on hearing of his father's illness, had returned from a considerable distance, he expressed much comfort in the consciousness of having brought up all his children in religious principles and habits! A day or two previous to his decease, a near relative began to read the church prayers for the visitation of the sick, by his bedside; another relative, fearing it might fatigue their beloved friend, wished to stop the reading, when he emphatically said, 'Let him go on.' At the close of every prayer, he ejaculated, 'Amen,' with deep devotional fervency, and at the conclusion, said, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend



my spirit." His last intelligent words were, 'My ransom is paid.'

'Smitten friends,  
Are angels sent on errands full of love :  
*For us* they languish, and *for us* they die :  
And shall they languish ; shall they die in  
vain ?'

No ! rather let us enquire what message this stroke of God's providence has been commissioned to bear to our own souls. There are two particularly striking features in this lamented instance of mortality : first, it was unexpected, since neither the age, nor the apparent vigour and activity of the individual thus suddenly cut off in the meridian of life, could have warranted any expectation of such an event. Secondly, even the short period of his illness was scarcely permitted to be a season of preparation for eternity ; for the above recorded, sweet, and most satisfactory testimonies to his blessed Saviour's presence with him, in his passage through "the dark valley," were just the occasional bright gleams of "the Sun of righteousness," shining into his soul, and dispelling for a moment the gloom of torpor and feverish delirium, which oppressed his body and his spirit, during the greater part of his last days of suffering. "As the tree fell," therefore, so it was "to lie." He was just permitted to receive the intimation, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him," and he had just time to reply in spirit, "Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly." But summoned thus suddenly out of life, and amidst this heavy pressure of disease on the corporeal and mental powers, had the "oil" of heavenly grace been wanting in the "lamp" of faith, there would have been no time, or ability for *him* to "go to them that sell, and buy for himself." Shall we not do well then to learn from the striking example before us, what madness it is to put off to a dying hour, the all-

important work of becoming reconciled to God ?

The death-bed of our departed friend may teach us a deeply interesting secret. What gave him this heroic calmness, and this blessed peace, when death, as it were, started from his ambush, and claimed him as his prey ? It was *faith* ;—a firm, practical, realizing faith in *the atonement wrought by a crucified Redeemer*, which was "the anchor, sure and steadfast," on which his soul reposed ; "the rock," on which his hopes of salvation were built ; and though "the flood" of death arose, and beat vehemently upon that house, yet it could not shake it, "for it was founded upon a rock."

But it is scarcely a point of inferior moment to observe, that although our lamented friend did *not build his hopes of salvation* on "any works of righteousness which he had done ;" yet such works, (which are the inseparable accompaniments of saving faith) *were exemplified in his life*. Seldom, perhaps never, has there been a stronger testimony borne to the religious and moral character of any individual, than the universal suffrage which has been rendered, since his decease, by persons of all ranks and all classes, who were in any way acquainted with our departed friend, to the piety, the integrity, the purity, the charity, the humility, and the usefulness of his life and character. It was his daily, earnest, diligent endeavour, to "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." He sought, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, to make his life a commentary on that beautiful passage of scripture, 2 Peter i. 5—7, from which, only six months previous to his decease, he had preached, and published two very valuable discourses ; "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge

temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness charity."

We cannot but feel that the subject of this brief obituary is a public loss to all those in his neighbourhood, who frequently heard from his lips the glad tidings of salvation; to the young gentlemen whom he was bringing up in "the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom;" to his friends, his family, and all who were in any way connected with him. But while we may, and ought to "lay it to heart," that "a righteous man" has perished from the earth, still must even those who have cause to mourn this event

most deeply, bow with submission to the Almighty fiat which has laid him low, and acknowledge, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." In the glowing words therefore of one of our most devotional poets, may we conclude this faithful, though imperfect portrait of departed excellence.

'Go to the grave:—although in manhood's prime

In full activity of zeal, and power;

A Christian cannot die before his time,

The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour.

'Go to the grave:—no, take thy seat above,

Be thy pure spirit present with the Lord,

Where thou for faith, and hope, hast perfect love,

And open vision for the written word.

## MISCELLANIES.

"THERE is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1. This is a matter of experience as well as of hope; for though they that are in Christ shall not be condemned, however dispirited and troubled they may be now, yet such as have not the heart's consciousness of being in Christ, are always liable to the voice of the accuser, tormenting and perplexing them.—M. S.

The worst kind of spiritual discomfort, is that depression which 'enchains the faculties without destroying them,' and weakens our sense of God's mercies, while it renders us more sensitive of his displeasure. Such a case is generally bodily and nervous, and perhaps will not be fully remedied, till we put off the corruptible body. But in the mean time, our most appropriate prayer will be this: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name; the righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Psalm cxlii. 7. What offering shall we bring unto God for this mercy? The engagement

contained in these words, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Psalm cxix. 32. And what is his ground of hope that his petition will be received? David's trust, "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Psalm cxxxviii. 8. —M. S.

About the beginning of the seventeenth century, Peter Jansen, a Dutch merchant, caused a ship to be built answering in its proportions to those of Noah's ark; the length of it being one hundred and twenty feet, the breadth of it twenty, and the depth of it twelve. At first this was laughed at as fanatical (Jansen being a Memnonite), and while it was building, he and his ship were ridiculed, as Noah and his ark were formerly. But when it was finished, they found that ships of this kind were more commodious in time of peace for commerce, because they held a third more, without requiring any more hands, and were found better runners than any that had been made before.—*Parker's Bibliotheca Biblica.*